



# **A Study on The Perceptions of Youths and Their Parents on Vocational and Technical Training – Sarawak**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objectives of this study are to obtain a profile of the socio –economic background of youths and their parents in Sarawak and their awareness and perceptions towards vocational and skills training. Based on the results of the analysis, recommendations are suggested to the State Government.

A quota sample of 608 youths age between 15-30 and their parents reflective of the demographic and socio-economic profile of Sarawak is chosen. The findings show that 19.6 per cent of the youths are unemployed 38.7 per cent are employed, 38.5 per cent are schooling and 3.5 per cent are waiting to further studies.

Among the unemployed youths, 75 per cent of them are from the 19-26 age group. The largest unemployed group are school leavers with Form 4-5 qualification with the unemployment rate of 38.4 per cent. *“Lack of suitable jobs”*, *“Never succeed in getting a job”* and *“Lack of skills”* are the main reasons cited for the unemployment. However, 18.9 per cent of the unemployed choose *“not to work or not interested to work”*

About 46.5 per cent of the youths have acquired some form of skills mainly through their employment in the manufacturing sector and the car repair workshops. However, only 6.9 per cent have acquired their skills from public training agencies.

In terms of the factors which motivate youths to go for vocational and technical training 84 per cent of them prefer *“Field of their choice”*, follows by 77 per cent of them who would go for such training if they have *“Confidence to succeed”*. The majority ( 57.2%) of the youths prefer the venue of training to be near their homes while others are willing to go anywhere. The most popular duration of training is from two to six months.. However a quarter of them prefer the duration of training exceeding one year.

There are about 17 per cent of the youths who are not motivated to go for training and 50 per

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION -THE NEEDS OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia is on the road to achieving the status of a fully-developed nation by the year 2020. According to the World Development Report 1999/2000, in 1998, the per capita GNP measured at PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) is US\$ 6990 which gives Malaysia the ranking of 79 out of a total of 210 economies. However, Malaysia still has a long way to go in catching up with the NIEs and other industrialised economies. For instance, the per capita measured at PPP for Singapore, Germany and Japan are 28,620, 20,810 and 23,180 dollars respectively. The corresponding rankings in terms of per capita measured at PPP, for Singapore, Germany and Japan are 5, 20 and 14 respectively. The large gap in ranking between Malaysia and the other three industrialised economies is due mainly to the fact that Malaysia lacks the critical mass of skilled technical workforce to sustain the pace of industrialisation. As a result, Malaysia's industrial sector is focusing mainly on the phase of assembling and testing which is low value-added and labour-intensive. It is timely that the Government is now in the process of formulating a master plan for the transition of Malaysia from the production-based economy (P-economy) to knowledge-based economy (K-economy).

According to UNIDO Country Industrial Statistics, the Total Manufacturing Value Added per employee of Malaysia in 1996 is US\$ 19,853, while the corresponding 1997 figures for Singapore and the United States are US\$69,369 and US\$111,016 respectively. In spite of the economic down of 1997-98 during which the manufacturing sector experienced a contraction of 13.7 per cent in 1998, the sector has rebounded strongly to



## 2.0 PROFILE OF YOUTHS

The 608 youths are selected from the 15-30 age group which represents 29.3 per cent of the total population of the State. Although the Government's definition of youth is in the 15-24 age group, the 25-30 age group is included in the study because the oldest of this age group will still be in the labour force even by the year 2020 and whatever training received by this group will be significant in terms of increased economic returns and labour productivity.

This particular age group is selected because, according to Chapman (97):

*".. young workers have the largest pay-back period and the lowest opportunity cost of training time should be the best human capital investment."*

Out of the 608 respondents, 354 or 59 per cent of the youths have left school while the rest are still pursuing their secondary education.

In terms of employment status, of those who have left school, 236 are working while 117 are unemployed, thus, giving an unemployment rate of 31.2 per cent among the school leavers in the 15-30 age group. This is quite consistent with the findings in the 1997 Statistics Yearbook of Sarawak that in 1996, among the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups, the unemployment rates were 31.6 and 34.5 per cent respectively.

Out of the 354 school leavers, only 14 or 8.1 per cent have received some form of training. This finding shows that the formal general education system fails to impart marketable skills. Among the unemployed, 9 or 7.7 per cent have either college or university education while nearly 61 per cent of the unemployed have upper secondary